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ABSTRACT

A number of documents described in this report will be produced over the next three years, and will serve to assist LEAs and SEAs in performing their duties more effectively: (1) legislative enactments in accountability from the Wisconsin Department of Education; (2) criterion standards from Florida; (3) accountability models, including the elements, logical practices, needed resources, and methods to be used, will be developed in Minnesota; (4) role expectations of participants in an accountability system will be identified in Colorado; and (5) performance indicators are being developed in Oregon. Reporting procedures that have been field-tested in Michigan will be available by June 1973. (Author)

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COOPERATIVE ACCOUNTABILITY PROJECT

An Overview of the Cooperative Accountability Project

by Arthur R. Olson

Historically, the State Education Agency has had a limited evaluative role in education. Major decisions about the education process have been left to the local education agency with the state serving in consultative roles. SEAs have been involved in evaluation exercises in relation to accreditation. But this procedure has not been especially penetrating in that they generally examined staff, facilities, equipment, materials, and a perfunctory analysis of the products of the school. Almost any district can meet minimum standards and in most situations where accreditation is not given, it is a conscious decision by the local district not to meet minimum standards.

State education agencies and local school districts are now faced with a changing situation. Legislation has been passed in at least twenty-five states which has required statewide evaluation or assessment of public school programs. The state agencies must assume this new role as evaluation agents at a time when they are generally not prepared and for which few models exist. The skills and the procedures must be gained quickly to meet the growing demands.

As a result, the Cooperative Accountability Project was initiated with seven cooperating states working closely with representatives of the U.S. Office of Education, theorists and practitioners in developing a comprehensive accountability system which will serve as a model for implementation in other states.

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Several aspects of accountability have been identified as essential to the development of an operational system. These components have been completed or are in process of development in each of seven states.

Wisconsin

Wisconsin has assumed the responsibility for a number of publications that are being distributed and used in states and local school districts. The State Educational Accountability Repository (SEAR) is also located in Wisconsin. Dr. Archie Buchmiller, Deputy Superintendent in Wisconsin, will go into detail concerning these products. At this point, I will just indicate the categories of materials being developed under the Cooperative Accountability Project.

Legislative Enactments - Includes the monitoring and updating of proposed, pending, and newly enacted accountability legislation. Model legislation in accountability, assessment, and testing has also been prepared for distribution to all concerned.

State Educational Goals - This effort consists of a compilation of all state goals and a categorization of the areas of emphasis in the various states.

Common Variables of Legislation - A third effort concentrates on the critical common features of enacted legislation from the states.

A State of the Art Document - This study will compile current information on what is being done across the nation in accountability programs at the state level. This publication will complement a similar publication to be released by the Education Commission of the States.

The final major effort in Wisconsin is the State Educational Accountability Repository and the bibliography of all publications currently available from the repository.

Florida

Florida is concentrating on eight criterion standards essential to the development of a comprehensive accountability system. At the present time, Florida is, first, describing procedures for the establishment of goals and the identification of criteria of relevance of supporting objectives and the extent to which community involvement should occur in validating the educational goals and objectives.

A second activity includes a description of several models of criteria for components of product objectives as revealed in the literature and in the accountability model used in Florida.

A third paper will describe the methods for selecting student performance or output objectives and indicate the standard elements to be included in the objective.

The fourth product will describe the procedures for administering, scoring, and analyzing assessment instruments. National assessment information and the experience of other states will be utilized.

A fifth paper will describe conditions under which objective-referenced and norm-referenced tests can and should be used.

The sixth publication will include at least one method of staff training procedure appropriate for use at the state and local levels. The paper will consist of the rationale and procedures that experienced states have used in their training programs.

A seventh document will establish technical specifications for test items, exercises, or instruments based on whether these specifications are considered mandatory or optional.

Finally, Florida is preparing a complete manual covering the several categories described above.

Minnesota

Minnesota is preparing a publication that will define assessment, discuss its components, and illustrate several varieties of assessment and categories with an analysis of their strengths and weaknesses. The publication will cover sampling procedures, instrument selection, processing of information, reporting, use and follow-up of information, curriculum change procedures, and time schedules.

Oregon

Oregon is developing and analyzing a number of "indices of quality." These indices will relate to educational goals adopted in a number of states. Three levels of indicators and their potential utilization will be examined. Included will be an inventory and analysis of data currently available from state and local agencies relating to instructional, management, and support programs in several states. Criteria for the selection of the indicators for the three levels will be developed including dropout rates, college entrance rate, college success, employment information, and perceptions of the school graduate after five years. All of the indices will provide information on the quality of the educational program.

Maryland

The State of Maryland is identifying and defining the components of a comprehensive accountability system that should be subjected to cost studies. The cost information will be obtained from states with a variety of accountability-type activities. The sources of funding for an accountability system will be determined for (1) development costs, (2) implementation costs, (3) and costs associated with the maintenance of a continuing accountability system at the state level.

Colorado

After identifying the groups that are and should be concerned with an operational accountability system that is faced with legislative controls and restraints, Colorado is preparing a document which lists and explains the role expectations of the identified groups - legislators, state and local agencies, the community, government agencies, boards of education, professional groups, and organized lay citizens. The materials will also indicate the nature of the involvement of the identified groups for each of the major events in the development and operation of the accountability system.

Michigan

Michigan is in the process of developing appropriate procedures for the dissemination of accountability and assessment information to concerned groups and individuals such as the governor, the legislature, state boards and departments of education, teachers, superintendents, local boards of education and concerned citizen groups. The essential purpose is to identify the best possible procedures

(1) to acquaint people with needed information about accountability and assessment programs and (2) to stimulate utilization of the information by government officials, educators, and citizens. It is generally accepted that education is being forced to become more conscious of its effectiveness at both the local and state levels. The implication for citizens and educators is that there is a "better way" to conduct the educational system based upon the utilization of valid and proper information. Clearly, then, since the objectives of communication differ with different audiences, the selection of the materials and the delivery system itself must be appropriate to the audience.

In summary, a number of documents will be produced over the next two years to assist local school districts and state education agencies in performing their duties more effectively: Legislative Enactments in accountability from Wisconsin; Criterion Standards from Florida; Accountability Models, including the elements, logical practices, needed resources, and methods to be used, will be developed in Minnesota; Role Expectations of participants in an accountability system will be identified in Colorado; Performance Indicators are being developed in Oregon; Reporting Procedures that have been field-tested in Michigan will be available by June 1973. All of these components will be combined to provide a comprehensive accountability system for use by state agencies and local school districts across the nation.

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